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Cape Wind energy project gets approved

By [Physics Today](#) on April 28, 2010 2:48 PM | [No Comments](#) | [No TrackBacks](#)

Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar [today approved the Cape Wind renewable energy project](#) on a 25-mile section of federal submerged lands in Nantucket Sound, but will require the developer of the \$1 billion wind farm to agree to additional binding measures to minimize the potential adverse impacts of construction and operation of the facility.

"With this decision we are beginning a new direction in our Nation's energy future, ushering in America's first offshore wind energy facility and opening a new chapter in the history of this region," Salazar said in an announcement at the State House in Boston.

The [Cape Wind project](#) would be the first offshore wind farm for the US, generating enough power to meet 75% of the electricity demand for Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, and Nantucket Island, combined with an average anticipated output of 182 megawatts, and a maximum of 468 megawatts.

The project will also cut carbon dioxide emissions from conventional power plants by 700 000 tons annually.

First of many?

Although a number of offshore wind farms are being constructed in Europe and some proposed in Canada, [according to the New York Times](#), developers are waiting for the approval of the first US offshore wind farm before formally submitting more applications in the US.

Offshore wind farms are about twice as expensive as land-based wind farms, although they usually have access to more frequent and stronger winds, which can make them cost competitive if a carbon tax is introduced. Roughly 1 million megawatts of potential Atlantic wind energy exists along the US east coast.

The project didn't emerge completely unscathed after the Department of the Interior review: Changes to the design were proposed to diminish the visual effects of the project from the shore; the turbines are to be painted off-white to contrast with the sea and sky yet remain visible to birds; nighttime lighting for air and sea traffic will be reduced; and the number of turbines has been reduced from 170 to 130.

"After almost a decade of exhaustive study and analyses, I believe that this undertaking can be developed responsibly and with consideration to the historic and cultural resources in the project area," Salazar said.

Paul Guinnessy

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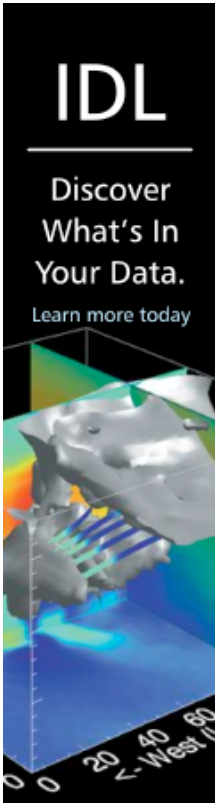
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